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AUTHOR Wilkinson, David
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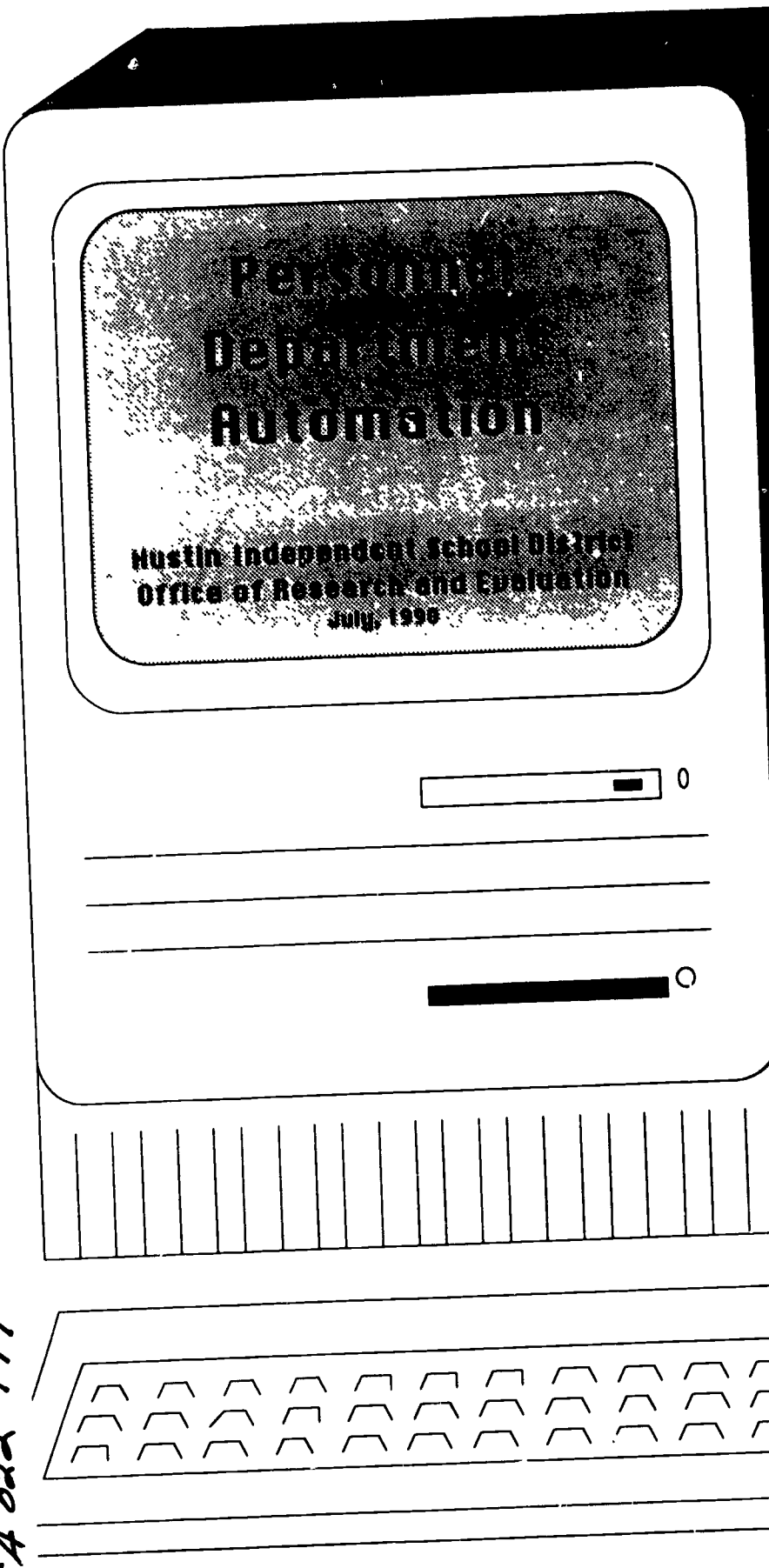
ABSTRACT

In 1989, the Austin Independent School District's Office of Research and Evaluation was directed to monitor the automation of personnel information and processes in the district's Department of Personnel. Earlier, a study committee appointed by the Superintendent during the 1988-89 school year identified issues related to Personnel Department operations and made recommendations for improvement, including computerization of the applicant process. Findings show that a computerized applicant file has been developed and the programming completed to allow principals to select from qualified candidates the ones they want to review and hire. Online access by principals will be worked out during 1990-91. Many personnel operations are already automated, including payroll/personnel, budget location, job titles, budget status, tracer letters, career ladder information, administrative applicants, personnel transfers, elementary personnel, position codes, Texas Teacher Appraisal System, employee leave, and student and staff directories. Some personnel operations yet to be automated are employees' reasons for leaving, job descriptions, microfilming records, elementary teacher schedules, and employee applications. Personnel administrators see in automation the potential for more efficient staffing, with certain constraints. The size of the mainframe computer seems to be the biggest obstacle to automation, but that problem will be remedied soon. Personnel need to review and revise current procedures to keep pace with changes associated with the district's movement to site-based management. (MLH)

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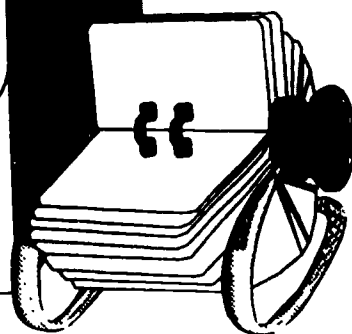
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Personnel Department Automation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AUTHOR: David Wilkinson

Program Description

In October, 1989, the Superintendent directed ORE to monitor the automation of personnel information and processes in the Department of Personnel. The assignment of ORE to conduct an evaluation was another step in the ongoing process of improving the functioning of the Personnel Department. Earlier, a Study Committee on the Operations of the Personnel Office, appointed by the Superintendent during the 1988-39 school year, identified issues related to Personnel Department operations and made recommendations for improvement, including computerization of the applicant process.

Major Findings

1. A computerized applicant file has been developed and the programming completed to allow principals to select from qualified candidates the ones they want to interview and hire. The process for on-line access to the file by the principals will be determined by a committee during the 1990-91 school year. (Pages 3, 4)
2. Many Personnel operations are already automated, some for many years. The operations for which files are maintained, and from which much information is derived, include: (Pages 6-7)
 - Payroll/Personnel (15 years)
 - Budget Location (11 years)
 - Job Title (11 years)
 - Budget Status (9 years)
 - Tracer Letters (7 years)
 - Career Ladder (6 years)
 - Administrative Applicants (6 years)
 - Personnel Transfers (6 years)
 - Elementary Personnel (6 years)
 - Position Code (5 years)
 - Texas Teacher Appraisal System (4 years)
 - Employee Leave (2 years)
 - Student and Staff Directories (1 year)
3. Some Personnel operations which are not yet automated are:
 - Employees' reasons for leaving,
 - Job descriptions,
 - Microfilming records,
 - Elementary teacher schedules, and
 - Employee applications. (Page 10)
4. Personnel administrators see in automation the potential for more efficient staffing, with certain constraints. They see the size of the mainframe computer as the biggest obstacle to automation, but they anticipate that planned automation will be accomplished soon. (Page 5)
5. Personnel will need to review and revise current procedures to keep pace with changes associated with the District's movement to site-based management. (Page 5)

INTRODUCTION

In October, 1989, the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) was charged by the Superintendent with evaluating the progress being made in automating the Department of Personnel. The assignment of ORE to conduct an evaluation was another step in the ongoing process of improving the functioning of the Personnel Department.

Previously, during the 1988-89 school year, the Superintendent had appointed a Study Committee on the Operations of the Personnel Office and charged it with the responsibility to identify and assess issues related to:

- Personnel Department operations,
- Computerization of basic personnel information,
- Procedures for staffing campuses,
- Process for hiring,
- Relationship of the Personnel Department to campuses,
- Current personnel policies, and
- Ideal timeline for personnel actions.

The committee delivered its report in January, 1989. This report and a written response from the Department of Personnel were presented and discussed with administrators on September 13, 1989. The report was delivered to the Board of Trustees on 1989.

Studies of Personnel operations and responses by the Department of Personnel have been taking place for a number of years. Readers interested in gaining a fuller understanding of the underlying issues are urged to consult two documents (ORE Publication Letter 89.R):

- A Report to the Superintendent by The Committee to Study Personnel Office Operations, January 1989, and
- Recommendations from the Study of Personnel Office Operations, September 1989, the response from the Department of Personnel.

Interested readers should also see Evaluation of Personnel Staffing Report (ORE Publication Letter 89.I), which summarizes the results of a questionnaire administered to principals to get their input on the performance of the assistant directors of Personnel who staff their campuses. This data collection was undertaken by Personnel in October, 1989, on the recommendation of the study committee. ORE audited the analyses performed by Personnel and composed appropriate narrative summary statements.

During the 1989-90 school year, ORE staff interviewed key administrators in the Department of Personnel. A question-by-question transcription of their responses is provided in Attachment 1. This and other information supplied by Personnel and by staff in the Department of Management Information serve as the basis for this report, which focuses only on the automation of operations in Personnel and does not substantively address the functioning of the Department of Personnel as a whole.

AUTOMATION OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS

A computerized applicant file has been developed, the file has been loaded with applicant data, and the programming to produce reports has been written. With its attendant report-generating capability, the applicant file should prove to be a flexible and powerful tool in the application process. Users in Personnel need more training to utilize the system to its fullest capacity. The process for on-line access to the file by campuses will be determined by a committee during the 1990-91 school year.

One of the central issues pertaining to Personnel automation considered by the evaluation was the application process, specifically, the computerization of applicant information. The Superintendent's study committee cited four problems in this area:

- Principals not having equal access to all applications when staffing,
- The sharing of applications among the assistant directors sometimes hampering the employment of the applicants,
- Applications frequently not being updated, thereby wasting principals' time considering applicants who are no longer available, and
- Applications occasionally being unavailable when principals want to review them or when an inquiry is made about them.

The study committee made two "recommended solutions" which mentioned computerization specifically:

1. "The computerization of applications should be a high priority and should be implemented as soon as possible."
2. "All applications should be updated or purged from the files on a systematic basis. If all applications were computerized this would be an easy thing to do."

In its response to the committee's report, Personnel agreed with both of these recommendations, noting that a computerized applicant file was a high priority which had the support of the Superintendent and that automatically generated tracer letters would be included in the design of a computerized applicant file.

One of the questions addressed to Personnel administrators in a March, 1990, interview concerned the status of this computerized applicant file. See Attachment 1 (question 5). More recent information obtained from Personnel establishes that:

- The computerized applicant file has been developed.
- It has been fully loaded with applicant data.
- The programming to produce customized reports and standard applicant follow-up letters has been completed and has been installed on line.
- Personnel staff will require some time and training to accustom themselves to using the new system.
- On-line access to the computerized applicant file is restricted to Personnel at this time.

In sum, the first of two phases, that of designing and implementing a computerized applicant file, has been completed. The second phase, exporting the system to the campuses in some form, has yet to be accomplished. An Applicant File Implementation Committee has been constituted to decide how best to achieve this, but it will not meet until fall, 1990. It will be the responsibility of this committee to consider the policy issues involved and to make recommendations regarding campus access to the applicant file. It will then be the responsibility of the campuses to make use of the system and to suggest changes and refinements. Personnel anticipates that principals will need to be trained and will require perhaps a year to become familiar with the system.

ALREADY-AUTOMATED PERSONNEL OPERATIONS

Many Personnel operations are already automated, some for many years. Because of automated reporting from files, campuses are not asked to respond to most surveys and other required reports.

Personnel administrators were asked in March, 1990, what Personnel operations were already automated. Attachment 1 details their responses (see question 6). Information supplied by these administrators and by staff in the Department of Management Information is summarized in Figure 1. Examination of Figure 1 shows that:

- Many Personnel operations are already automated, some for many years.
- Considerable information is provided for various required reports via these files and programs, information which otherwise probably would be requested from campuses.

OTHER PERSONNEL OPERATIONS AND AUTOMATION

Personnel administrators see in automation the potential for more efficient staffing, with certain constraints. They see the size of the mainframe computer as the biggest obstacle to automation, but they anticipate that planned automation will be accomplished soon. The administrators foresee challenges for Personnel in the District's movement toward site-based management.

In the March, 1990, interview Personnel administrators were asked what other Personnel operations could usefully be automated beyond the payroll/personnel and applicant files. Their responses are rendered in Attachment 1 (question 7). Figure 2 summarizes the Personnel operations slated for automation.

Personnel administrators were also asked about the benefits they saw in automation, the obstacles which needed to be overcome, the timeline for automating additional operations, and the contribution of automation to meeting the challenges ahead they foresaw. Their responses are presented in Attachment 1 (questions 8-10).

In general, Personnel administrators saw in automation the potential for more efficient staffing, although they saw it as being less flexible and having more constraints. They saw the size of the mainframe computer as the biggest obstacle to automation, but they anticipated that the automation they had planned would be accomplished during the summer of 1990. The administrators foresaw challenges for Personnel in the movement in the District toward site-based management.

Some operations not mentioned by Personnel administrators which are not now automated and might be considered for the future are tabled in Figure 3.

Figure 4 presents an inventory of the automated equipment now available in Personnel, shown by position.

FIGURE 1
AUTOMATED OPERATIONS IN THE DEPARTMENT
OF PERSONNEL AS OF SUMMER, 1990

AUTOMATED PRIOR TO 1989-90

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<u>OPERATION</u>	<u>FUNCTION</u>	<u>LENGTH OF TIME</u>	<u>STATUS/COMMENTS</u>
Payroll/Personnel File	Maintain payroll and personnel records for the current year for all AISD employees.	15 years	Also known as the Employee Master Records (EMR) File.
Budget Location File	Contains budget locations, supervisors, mailing addresses.	11 years	Used with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Report.
Job Title File	Contains all job titles in the District, keyed by job code, and related data.	11 years	A new, improved version was installed in 1989-90.
Budget Status File	Shows what is budgeted for all accounts in the District.	9 years	Used by other departments than Personnel also.
Tracer Letters	On entry of name and address, produces form letter.	7 years	On the WANG mainframe.
Career Ladder File	Maintain all pertinent career ladder data on each professional employee, including nonteaching professionals. Used to pay the career ladder supplement and to maintain all career ladder history.	6 years	
Administrative Applicant File	Tracking administrative job applicants.	6 years	File is on the WANG computer and will be replaced by the new applicant file.
Planning Elementary Personnel	Management tool to help with the planning of elementary school personnel with consideration to pupil-teacher ratios. Actual and planned PTR's and class sizes are automatically calculated and displayed by grade level and for the entire school. In addition, a districtwide summary screen can be accessed.	6 years	New, improved version installed in April, 1990.

<u>OPERATION</u>	<u>FUNCTION</u>	<u>LENGTH OF TIME</u>	<u>STATUS/COMMENTS</u>
DPS Criminal History Check File	To check criminal history for bus drivers.	6 years	DPS = Department of Public Safety All employees will be included in the future. Target date: February, 1991.
Personnel Transfer File	Used to track teacher transfer requests and when they are rejected or accepted over a two-year period.	6 years	Provides computerized feedback to teachers requesting transfers to tell them "yes" or "no."
Position Code File	Like the Job Title File, it contains all the position codes in the Personnel file and a description of positions.	5 years	
PTR Reports	Calculate pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) by school and grade via spreadsheet program.	5 years	Data supplied by Personnel Assistant and Student Records. Provided for HB 1758 reporting.
7 Texas Teacher Appraisal System File	Allows appraisers to input all appraisal and data for the TTAS system. Produces automated reports and the Appraisal Record itself.	4 years	Used for teachers only. Maintained for the current year only. Data are stored annually
Electronic Mail	Permits electronic communication between Personnel and campuses.	3 years	Speeds communication and reduces the amount of paper exchanged.
Leave File	Tracking employee leave, contains all leave transactions for all employees for current and prior year.	2 years	
Budget Staffing Tables	Create budget book pages showing number of positions at each campus.	2 years	Uses an ORACLE-based language for data entry.
Student and Staff Directory Staff	On-line directory of students and staff.	1 year	

AUTOMATED IN 1989-90

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<u>OPERATION</u>	<u>FUNCTION</u>	<u>TARGET DATE</u>	<u>STATUS/COMMENTS</u>
Administrative/Professional Applicant File	Allows principals to select from qualified candidates the ones they want to interview/ hire. Also provides means to do analyses on the number of available, qualified applicants for a position, and to track applicants.	< 1 year	Recommendations to be made in 1990-91 by the Applicant File Implementation Committee.
<u>Associated functions:</u>			
Applicant Print	Produces customized reports by entering certain data.		
∞ Applicant File On-Line	On entry of job code, provides all qualified applicants.		Reproduces most of the information on the Applicant File. Updated each night from the Applicant File.
Staff Personnel Tracer Letters	Produces five different types of tracer letters.		Not yet widely used.

FIGURE 2
PERSONNEL OPERATIONS TO BE AUTOMATED AFTER 1989-90

<u>OPERATION</u>	<u>FUNCTION</u>	<u>TARGET DATE</u>	<u>STATUS/COMMENTS</u>
Anonymous Reason-for-Leaving Questionnaire File	Maintain statistics on an anonymous questionnaire employees fill out as they leave the District.	February, 1991	Of lesser priority than some major revisions to TTAS and the EMR needed because of changes in law.
Substitute Office	Assign substitutes to fill in for absent teachers.	Undetermined	Depends on the availability of funds.

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FIGURE 3
PERSONNEL OPERATIONS WHICH ARE NOT AUTOMATED

<u>OPERATION</u>	<u>FUNCTION</u>	<u>STATUS/COMMENTS</u>
Reasons for leaving	Monitoring why professional and administrative employees and their employment with the District.	This information is helpful to the administration and Board in maintaining the district's ability to attract and retain qualified staff.
Job descriptions	Documenting the tasks and responsibilities of the District's many positions.	If entered in PC database software, information could be sorted by variable, e.g., by certifications required or by common job duty.
Microfilming	Maintaining records.	Replacing paper records with microfilm record reduces the space needed to store records and makes information easier to retrieve.
Elementary teacher schedules (PEIMS)	Tracking which elementary teachers are assigned to which grades/classes.	PEIMS = Public Education Information Management System Capital will be piloted in 1990-91 and fully implemented in 1991-92.
Employee applications	Secure information from persons applying for positions with the District.	If maintained on a file, could be revised and updated easily.

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FIGURE 4
AUTOMATED EQUIPMENT USED IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL

POSITION	EQUIPMENT	
	TERMINAL	PC (TERMINAL)
Executive Director		1
Human Resource Analyst	1	1
Assistant Directors (5)	3	1
Employee Relations Director	1	1
Coordinator Unit Supervisors (2)	2	
Employee Relations Unit Supervisor	1	
Personnel Accountant	1	
Assistant Personnel Accountant	1	
Coordinator Substitute Services*	1	1
Leave Analysts (2)	2	1
Certification Analyst		1
Receptionist	1	
Secretaries (15)	3	13
* Shares office and machines with the Substitute Services Technician		

TOTAL:

17 terminals
 20 PC/terminal combinations
 6 printers (3 laser, 3 other)

There are a total of 37 workstations for 34 employees.

Personnel Department Administrator Interview

March, 1990

A joint interview with the Executive Director and the Human Resource Analyst of the Department of Personnel was conducted on March 26, 1990 as part of the evaluation of automation in the Personnel Department. A summary of their remarks, transcribed from notes taken during the interview, follows. Most comments were made by the Executive Director. Where their viewpoints differed, or they offered different information, the respondents are identified--Executive Director (ED) or Human Resource Analyst (HRA). Editorial insertions, intended to clarify the content, are contained in brackets ([]).

1. What was your reaction to the automated personnel system you observed in the Dade County Public Schools?

I thought the system was fine. I didn't see it as a vast improvement over what we have. The policies and practices which backed up the system were different.

Dade County's is a very centralized system. The computer system gives the impression of being a lot more flexible than it is. We're already so flexible that to implement what Dade County did would mean putting restrictions on principals. Dade County took Personnel out of the middle in the staffing of the schools. Personnel didn't have to wear the "black hat" [i.e., be the "bad guy" in personnel matters, having to dictate to schools about staffing].

Philosophy and policies, not computerization, has done it [i.e., is responsible for the success of the Dade County system]. Overall, the Dade County personnel system is no better than ours. There are a lot of controls built in, but they aren't necessarily used. Their Personnel people did a lot of data input. They just worried about having an applicant pool available. I am impressed because that district could be a "total zoo" and it isn't. They're filling [i.e., fully staffing] their schools, and that's good.

2. What features of the Dade County system do you plan to implement here?

The applicant file. To have all of the applicants on the computer. Principals can call up and look at applicants. [Having an applicant file will] speed up looking at the applicant pool. It will also speed up sending out tracer letters.

3. What improvements or refinements to the features of the Dade County system do you plan to implement here?

We can't get away with the type of controls Dade County has put on their principals. We will continue to deal with applicants who aren't fully clear [i.e., whose applications are not complete]. I would not implement rigidity. We don't have the size--and there's no need for--a system like Dade County has. Besides, people just go around it [the system]. I would like to implement the part [of the Dade County system] of getting out of the middle [i.e., Personnel not being the middle man, the broker, between the applicants and the schools].

4. Please tell me about PELP. What benefits do you anticipate will derive from implementing this system? What are the limitations or drawbacks of this system?

ED: It will eliminate a lot of hard work by Data Services with the Student Enrollment Profile. There are many changes when we get the actual enrollment from the Office of Student Records and Reports. It will be of great benefit and a time saver. It will be a lot quicker than what we have now. It needs refinement to allow place for comments. [An advantage of the system is] that you can review information on screen--and not have to do the calculations yourself. The HRA uses a spreadsheet, but it will be replaced by PELP. If I were asked, "What do we need?" this would have been at the top of my list.

HRA: The system has a few limitations. It's missing a column for pre-K, and there needs to be more room.

[HRA: As of May, 1990, PELP has been completely reprogrammed and has been implemented. All limitations have been eliminated.]

5. What is the status in developing an applicant file which will permit:

(a) analyses as to the number of available, qualified applicants for a position,

(b) tracking of applicants, and

(c) equal access to applications by principals?

Please describe what progress has been made relative to each of these features.

(a)

HRA: The system has been written and 98% loaded with applicant data: sex, ethnicity, number of years of teaching experience, number of years in the District, special abilities, etc.

[As of May, 1990, the system has been completely loaded and is being maintained.]

Reports are not yet developed--that's the key to the system. There are four categories of reports:

1. On-line feedback by job code, e.g., journalism teachers,
2. Enter job codes or special ability codes to produce hard copy, and
3. Series of "applicant follow-up" letters (tracers, missing data, notification of "no hire," notification of application received), and
4. Reports on ethnicity, sex, how they were recruited to the District, etc.

Report production has been on hold since before spring break waiting for version 6 of ORACLE to be implemented. [As of May, 1990, version 6 has now been implemented.]

[HRA: As of May, 1990, the programming of reports has been finished; users in Personnel need to be trained.]

(b)

HRA.: Tracking is the reports. Concept development is done. The reports need to be written.

(c)

ED: There are a lot of policy issues involved. For example, should Priority Schools come first--and everyone else be blocked out [from access to applications]? Should we let everyone on system at once to share the same applicants? That's inefficient. The "have" schools would benefit from what principals say they want. Other schools not in the northwest and south will suffer. If we let the system turn into "dog eat dog," it will have very negative consequences.

6. What Personnel operations are already automated?

HRA: The Personnel File--around 13-15 years. The system is old, but it does a reasonably efficient job. The way you interact with the system is old. There are limitations which can't be overcome without redoing the system. It's not on-line. It doesn't carry a history.

The new personnel system is written and is ready to be tested but can't be used until we have a bigger computer. None of the associated reports has been written for the new system. Also, it needs to be tied to payroll.

ED: Leave office

HRA: Tracking employee leave--Leave File

[HRA: This file is used to determine eligibility for attendance bonuses.]

ED: Career Ladder

HRA: TTAS

ED: The Substitute Office has computer reports to track leave.

HRA: Part of the Personnel File.

HRA: The applicant file on the WANG computer for administrative applicants. It will be replaced.

HRA: Transfer File. It is used to track transfer requests and when they are rejected or accepted.

There is computerized feedback to the teachers requesting transfers to tell them "yes" or "no," you got it or you didn't.

HRA: We have made massive improvements in the data. There's been a lot of progress in data in the system. The new job code system is fully implemented. The new position code system is fully implemented.

HRA: FIND--a budget file--which shows what is left in the budget.

JOBS file--job codes and job files.

Keys to the codes in the Personnel File.

Position Code File--which contains the same thing for position.

TOSS--the computerized mail system which all administrators are on.

HRA: We are developing a file to track termination-- a "Reason-for-Leaving" file.

7. Beyond the payroll/personnel and applicant files, what other Personnel operations could usefully be automated?

HRA: A reason-for-leaving file. A Position File is being developed by PROTECH data.

ED: One area [for automation] is the Substitute Office. However, our people don't like complete automation because it allows teachers to request a substitute. There are developed systems out there. They are a lot more mechanical, a lot more rigid. Automation works some places, but we are used to a lot more service. An automated system turns the responsibility of finding a substitute to the principal rather than the Substitute Office. It stays their [the principals'] problem.

8. What do you see as of the greatest potential benefit from automating these operations, and what is the greatest obstacle which must be overcome for automation to be realized successfully?

HRA: The Position File and the Budget File are supposed to meet. Once the budget is set, the number of positions is set, and it is not to be exceeded, generally speaking.

ED: [This approach] tries to make a science out of what we do now as an art. It takes a mentality of less flexibility and more constraints. The benefit is having an established position in an approved budget with controls attached. [The situation] now is you have to trust us.

HRA: I foresee attaching job vacancies

ED: Dade County's system can pump from the applicant system to the Personnel file. The personnel file is tied into the applicant file. Effectively, you can "push a button and say, 'Hire.'"

HRA: The positions and people in the positions; they're updated by batch each night.

ED: Responding to requests [is a potential benefit]. [The system] ought to present the number of positions filled and the vacancies.

HRA: [Automation would provide a] system to track changes even during the course of the budget year.

ED: Point in time is very important.

HRA: The [size of the] machine is the biggest obstacle.

9. What sort of a timeline do you envision for automating these operations?

ED: Two years for Personnel/Payroll. We have to make sure the machine is big enough.

Applicant file this summer.

Position file this summer.

Reason-for-leaving file this summer.

HRA: Automating the Substitute Office depends on the availability of funds. [It is a] several \$100,000 system.

10. What do you see as the greatest challenge ahead for the Personnel Department, and how do you see automation as contributing to helping to meet this challenge?

Tell me where site-based managers are going and I'll answer the question. We are going to be adapting to the changes brought about by empowerment, A+, site-based management. Automation is the way to go to put more capability, more data on the campus, but we will have to sell more rigidity and inflexibility. The biggest hang-up is our confidence level in generating data before 1985. We need historical information on line. On-line capability will create efficiency. The role of the recruiter will have to change.

People don't realize how much good information we do have. We are not going from zero. We are not flexible enough, we are not on line, but we're fine. We're basically automated now. The data are in good shape.

Austin Independent School District

**Department of Management Information
Dr. Glynn Ligon, Executive Director**

**Office of Research and Evaluation
Systemwide Evaluation
David Wilkinson, Evaluator**

**Author:
David Wilkinson, Evaluator**

**Contributing Staff:
Ruth Fairchild, Secretary
Leonila M. Gonzalez, Secretary**



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